

O 141038Z APR 09
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9792
INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY DHAKA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMCONSUL CHENNAI
AMCONSUL MUMBAI
AMCONSUL TORONTO
USEU BRUSSELS
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USMISSION GENEVA
HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
DIA WASHINGTON DC
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
SECDEF WASHDC
CDRUSARPAC FT SHAFTER HI//APCW/APOP//
CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI//J3/J332/J52//

UNCLAS COLOMBO 000415

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR SCA (BOUCHER), SCA/INS AND PRM
STATE ALSO PASS USAID
AID/W FOR ANE/SCA, DCHA/FFP (DWORKEN, KSHEIN)
AID/W FOR DCHA/OFDA (MORRISP, ACONVERY, RTHAYER, RKERR)
ATHENS FOR PCARTER
BANGKOK FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA (WBERGER)
KATHMANDU FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA AND POL (SBERRY)
GENEVA FOR RMA (NKYLOH, NHILGERT, MPITOTTI)
USUN NEW YORK FOR ECOSOC (D MERCADO)
SECDEF FOR OSD - POLICY
PACOM ALSO FOR J-5

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREF](#) [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: Northern Sri Lanka SitRep 52

REF: A) Colombo 413 B) Colombo 412 C) Colombo 411 D) Colombo 402
E) Colombo 401 F) Colombo 400 G) Colombo 396 H) Colombo 393 I)
Colombo 384 J) Colombo 374 K) Colombo 368 L) Colombo 361 M)
Colombo 360 N) Colombo 321

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Just a few hours before the government-declared period of restraint ends at midnight local time on April 14, the pause appeared generally to be holding. The UN, ICRC and Sri Lankan health and military authorities were all reporting relatively low numbers of wounded, mostly from small-weapons fire. The Red Cross evacuated 460 persons, including wounded and their families, to the Indian-staffed field hospital at Pulmoddai on April 13 and planned to evacuate about 500 more today. A government health official noted that food supplies were again running low and were desperately needed. Relatively few civilians were able to flee LTTE-controlled territory, but the many remaining reportedly feared a resumption of intense military activity following the expiration of the New Year pause. The GSL reacted to the intrusion of Tamil protesters into their Embassy in Oslo by informing the Norwegian Ambassador that Norway's facilitation efforts were no longer viable. UN sources reported that the Secretary General's Chief of Staff Vijay Nambiar might pay a low-key visit to Sri Lanka beginning April 15. New Delhi was expecting a Tamil National Alliance parliamentary delegation for talks on April 15. A Co-Chairs conference call resolved to continue pressing for an end to the violence and urged the conflict parties to spare civilians. End summary.

Quiet in Safe Zone

2. (SBU) UN and ICRC confirm that Monday was relatively quiet in the safe zone. ICRC reports that 15 persons were wounded by gunfire and light shelling, of whom six died on arrival at a makeshift

health facility in the safe zone. UN puts the number wounded on Monday at 25. (Note: Embassy discounts much higher casualty figures reported by Tamil sources within the no-fire zone which appear inconsistent with information reported by the humanitarian organizations.)

ICRC Medevacs Underway

13. (SBU) Over 460 persons, including 250 wounded and sick, were evacuated by boat late Monday to Pulmoddai, where the Indian field hospital is located. 500 patients await evacuation. ICRC expects to do a further medevac on April 14.

14. (SBU) A government medical officer in the no fire zone confirmed the departure of the Red Cross ship with 460 persons for Pulmoddai hospital. He also reported that Puttumulatan hospital had received 18 civilian injured casualties. He commented that there was a severe shortage of food among the IDPs, noting that the last WFP shipment was about ten days ago and that the next supply ship had yet to arrive. He added that the civilians in the safe zone were afraid there would be a heavy attack by the Sri Lankan Army after the 48 hour period of restraint expires at midnight on April 14.

Military Reports No Significant Engagements

15. (SBU) Sri Lankan Army sources noted no significant engagements today. They reported that few civilians have managed to cross over to government-controlled territory. The Air Force told Defense Attache that bad weather and low clouds have hampered reconnaissance in the past couple of days. Their observations showed that the LTTE was using the pause to reinforce its fighting positions, employing at least six back-hoes, and concentrating civilians into the central portion of the safe zone and on the seaward side, in order to make it more difficult for the civilians to flee. The Air Force said it flew a couple of medevac missions on April 13 to pick up soldiers wounded by LTTE snipers.

GSL Suspends Norwegian Facilitation

16. (SBU) The Foreign Ministry released a statement late Monday announcing that in light of Sunday's attack by LTTE supporters on the Sri Lankan Embassy in Oslo and Norway's "sheer neglect" of its obligation to protect a diplomatic mission, the "Government of Sri Lanka perceives that it is no longer feasible to act as facilitator in the peace process." The Norwegians are still assessing the possible impact of the government's apparent termination of Norway's facilitator role. The Sri Lankan newspaper Daily Mirror quoted Norwegian facilitator Jon Hanssen-Bauer as saying that Norway has not been able to have a mediation role in Sri Lanka's civil war since the peace process broke down three years ago: "We cannot be facilitators in a peace process which has in effect been suspended since 2006."

UN Confirms Possible Nambiar Visit

17. (SBU) UN ResRep Neil Buhne told Ambassador on April 14 that Chief of Staff to the UN Secretary General Vijay Nambiar may make a low-profile visit to Sri Lanka beginning on the evening of April 15, subject to approval by President Rajapaksa.

LTTE Political Wing Calls for Negotiations

18. (U) According to the pro-LTTE website TamilNet, on April 13 the LTTE Political Division issued a statement in Tamil calling the GSL announcement of restricted military operations a "political drama" aimed at "deceiving the International Community and the Tamil people." The LTTE statement also reported that the Tigers were calling for a permanent ceasefire and political negotiations.

TNA Parliamentarians to New Delhi

19. (U) The Indian wire service IANS reported that the head of the

Tamil National Alliance parliamentary group Sampanthan will lead a delegation of his party to Delhi on April 15 to meet National Security Advisor M.K. Narayanan and Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon.

Co-Chairs Conference Call

10. (SBU) The Co-Chairs discussed the northern Sri Lankan situation via conference call for the second time in four days on April 13. The outcomes of the call, convened by Assistant Secretary Richard Boucher, included:

- Norway will continue to press the LTTE to release civilians during the current humanitarian pause.
- The U.S. and Japan will continue to seek appointment of a UN Special Envoy and his acceptance by the Sri Lankan government.
- The Co-Chairs reiterated their concern about the civilians and urged both sides to facilitate immediate food/medical shipments and medical evacuations.
- The Co-Chairs agreed to convene another conference call on April 15 at 7 am Washington time.

BLAKE